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ABSTRACT

In 1916, May Wynne, a 27-year-old teacher, traveled from Seattle, Washington, to Akiak, Alaska, to teach in a government native school. This book presents her account of the 3 years she spent in Akiak, which consisted of an Eskimo village on one side of the Kuskokwim River and a white settlement of miners, trappers, and traders on the other. Her story describes the difficult journey to Akiak by steamer, riverboat, and foot; the ongoing life in both Eskimo and White communities; and her experiences first as a teacher and later as doctor's wife and mother. When May arrived in Akiak, most of the indigenous people had been Christianized and had been persuaded by Moravian missionaries to build houses and plant gardens. However, the daily and seasonal life of the native people remained tied to the old economy of hunting and fishing, and much of the traditional culture continued. May was unusually accepting of Eskimo ways, and her memoirs include descriptions of a reindeer fair, a "potlatch," and a visit by dogsled to a reindeer camp where she stayed in an igloo with a native family. The book also documents the school setting, May's social circle among both Natives and Whites, the church, and May's family experience in Alaska. (SV)

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